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ABSTRACT

The Office of Educational Leadership (OEL) of the Minnesota State Department of Education initiated a project to develop and examine the effects of processes designed to transform schools into structures that assure that all students learn. In September 1989, 10 Research and Development (R&D) project sites received grants from the OEL. The implications for the change process drawn from baseline data collected during the first year of project activities are presented. The implications fall into three broad categories: (1) the Minnesota context for educational change; (2) the change itself; and (3) the change process. Perceived changes affecting educational transformation include changes in communities, families, students, and schools. More specifically, issues that require consideration in the Minnesota context include: the community milieu; attitudes and abilities of teachers; student needs; and needed changes in the curriculum. Many school personnel are confused about aspects of the change itself, notably the concept of outcome-based education. For the change process to be successful, a collegial management style sensitive to the competing priorities in the schools must be developed. Results of the baseline studies have convincingly demonstrated the potential of the R&D projects for educational transformation. An appendix lists 18 outcomes explored by a workshop on the OEL Project. (SLD)

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# After One Year:

# Implementation Issues for Ten Transformational R&D Sites

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## Introduction

In 1988, the Minnesota State Legislature established the Legislative Task Force on Education Organization, which began its work with the creation of a vision for education in the 21st century. The Task Force then examined three issues: learning opportunities that Minnesota students would need to attain that vision; the requisite organizational changes to support such opportunities; and the funding processes required for the emerging system. Building on an existing environment for change, the legislature established the Office of Educational Leadership (OEL) in July, 1989. Its broad charge was to create a foundation on which Minnesota's education system could be transformed to better meet the needs of students and society into the next century.

The OEL was directed in enabling legislation to develop a plan for a two-year research and development project (1989-1991) to determine the effectiveness of an outcome-based system of education in improving student learning. The legislation stipulated a number of project components, including the following: a hierarchy of learner outcomes; varied means for achieving these outcomes; appropriate methods of assessing pupils' thinking and problem-

solving skills; an objective process for studying project outcomes performed by an independent evaluator; and networks for communicating the results of the research.

The OEL Research and Development (R&D) Project was, therefore, initiated to develop and examine the effect of processes designed to transform schools into structures that assure that all students learn. In September, 1989, ten R&D project sites, comprising 17 districts and five educational consortiums representing greater Minnesota, suburban, and urban communities, received grants of $100,000 from the OEL. During the past two years, OEL staff and school-based colleagues have worked to operationalize the Minnesota Plan (Transforming Education, 1990), changing their individual project and learning sites, developing leadership skills to support the continuing change process, and connecting with a variety of people and organizations.

Because this transformation process requires new assumptions about how the world of education can and will work in the future, research activities have sought to identify policies and practices at the district and state levels that support or hinder the change process. This paper presents the results of baseline data

collected during the first year of project activities and discusses implications for the ongoing change process.

## Methodology

The OEL seeks to model an approach to research appropriate to its long-term transformational goals, and collaboration has therefore been central to the research process from its inception. At an April, 1990 meeting, approximately 50 project site representatives, OEL staff, and researchers jointly developed mutually acceptable research principles (OEL, 1991, p.14), major research questions for baseline data collection, and an inclusive set of methods. In the late spring, a team of 17 researchers from the Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) at the University of Minnesota collected baseline data during one to three day site visits. Included in the data collection process were the following:

> Focus group interviews with project leadership teams, school board members, community groups, parents, teachers, and teacher union representatives (when appropriate);
>
> Semi-structured one-on-one interviews with learning site principals, faculty opinion leaders, and teacher union representatives (when appropriate);

Spot observations of learning activities, both in and out of the classroom;

Records analysis of various project and learning site documents; and

At several sites, student writing or drawing assignments.

A number of factors clearly affected the research process. The constraints and limitations related to the nature and sheer size of the R&D project itself, the complexity of the intervention studied, the newness of a collaborative research process, time constraints, and the scope of the original research design. OEL Volume I: Phase I Evaluation Report presents in detail the design and methodology used to collect baseline data and the research and evaluation results generated from the study. OEL Volume II: Case Studies contains individual case study reports of ten district project sites and 29 learning sites.

## OEL Project Definitions

Three broad concepts underlie project activities: outcome-based education (OBE); the OEL clinical outcomes; and educational transformation more generally. As indicated previously, OEL's enabling legislation stipulated an R&D project using a "learner

outcome-based system of education." Outcome-based education, defined as "a way of defining, designing, developing, delivering, and documenting instruction in terms of its intended goals and outcomes" (Spady, 1988), is the centerpiece of Minnesota's current educational reform efforts (Houston, 1989; Erickson et al., 1990). The competitive proposals that districts wrote for OEL funding in August, 1990 described their plans for OBE implementation and experimentation, sometimes in a single program or building, other times across a district or group of districts. Over the course of 1989-1990, sites began work on their individual OBE change projects.

Simultaneously, OEL staff developed the OEL process that included not only school-based projects, but leadership training and professional development for educational transformation. At the April, 1990 research planning meeting, site personnel received copies of what are called OEL clinical outcomes, i.e., a set of broad outcomes for a transformed system of education that would form the basis of clinical training sessions. (See Appendix A). These serve not as blueprints for change, but rather as focal points for discussion and experimentation and include items like the following:

> Outcome Two: Learners are organized into multi-aged community [sic] of learners (of 75 to 125 learners for ages 3 through 7, 100 to 150 learners for ages 7 through 11, 100 to 250 learners for ages 11 through 14, and 200 to 300 learners for ages 14 through 21) which serve as their home base for three or more years. . .
>
> Outcome Nine: Site level decision processes involve a site council made up of a representative of each community of learners, satellite community of learners, support staff, and site administration personnel. . .

In addition to OBE and the OEL clinical outcomes, there is a third notion around which the project turns. It is clear that the Minnesota districts participating in the OEL R&D effort are also involved in numerous other change-related activities (e.g., the SDE's Minnesota Educational Effectiveness Program and Planning, Evaluating, and Reporting, or PER, legislation). Some are supported internally; others are supported with outside funding. Given its legislative mandate, the OEL seeks to coalesce these activities and leverage funding to stimulate major changes in the traditional system of education, so that project sites over time may evolve to radically different versions of what they are currently. Because project outcomes may therefore move beyond outcome-based education and even the OEL clinical outcomes, the term educational transformation rightly serves as a third descriptor of project

activities.

While the distinctions among these three concepts make sense for analytical purposes, in practice school staff tend to group all three under the single heading of "change activities our site is involved in." The baseline findings discussed here speak in part to the challenge of making sense of change as project sites began a long-term R&D effort funded in part by the OEL. It is important to note that the data reported here were collected prior to any of the OEL-sponsored clinicals and therefore record people's impressions of activities prior to formal OEL training opportunities.

## Project Findings

The baseline results answer two broad questions:

1. In the opinions of individuals who will be involved, what perceived changes will affect educational transformation in Minnesota; and
2. What has been the response of site personnel and community members to educational change activities prior to the beginning of formal OEL training?

Perceived Changes Affecting Educational Transformation

Minnesota educators and community members reported a number of significant changes that they feel must be taken into account if the transformational process is to be successful. Not surprisingly, these perceived changes involve four institutions or groups: communities; families; students; and schools.

Changes Occurring in Communities. Many school personnel reported less respect for education and teachers within communities currently than in the past. A number of project sites conveyed discouraging reports of how towns voted down important referenda, often when teachers' salaries were up for negotiation. Many districts in greater Minnesota have had to confront problems related to declining school enrollments, declining tax bases, and increasing percentages of older adults living on fixed incomes who have no children attending school. As a result, some sense these communities may be slow to support educational change, especially when such change might increase taxes. In the words of one community member,

> It is the people who don't have children that [sic] are the ones who have power to vote when it comes to passing referendums.

Further, those interviewed noted a widespread belief among many individuals that because traditional schools had been "good enough for them," they were therefore good enough for today's students, too, even though school buildings may be old or not well suited for implementing innovative teaching methods. As one person noted, "[The district] had a very good educational system in the beginning, and they have taken good care of it." For such individuals, the system is "not broken," so there is no need to "fix" it, particularly in radical ways.

In addition, changing social trends across project sites have led to more cultural diversity within communities and created new challenges for educational change. In communities that were until recently extremely homogeneous, adjusting to and accepting diverse cultures has reportedly been difficult. One teacher put it bluntly:

> If the expectation was that the outcome for our students before they could graduate was to demonstrate an empathy toward minorities, we would not graduate students.

Greater Minnesota communities have had to deal simultaneously with the exodus of their young people to urban areas and the inmigration of different ethnic groups, e.g., Hispanic migrant

workers who have chosen to settle rather than move on. At the same time, larger suburban and urban communities have had to deal with changing ethnic ratios and the need to move beyond desegregation to integration. As one parent put it,

> I see the problem as more than between the have's and have not's. People may have the same problems, but [they are] complicated by color. Our district is desegregated, but not integrated.

Changes Occurring in Families. Across the board, those interviewed reported two important changes in the families with whom they work: first, the number of traditional families in their districts has continually decreased in recent years, with a concomitant rise in the number of single parent families; and second, the number of families in which both parents work has increased dramatically. These changes have affected schools in fundamental ways. Parents in these families generally have less time for outside interests, including school activities, and adults' off-work time is often more focused on family-related matters, e.g., managing household responsibilities and spending time with their children. As one teacher put it,

> [Parents say] I can't do anything with my kid, but you can fix him. But don't bother me or get me involved or

inconvenience me in any way as you're helping that child achieve. Make them love it, and don't contact me.

Changes Occurring in Students. Related to the perceived changes in family life, children are reportedly spending more time either in structured programs away from their homes or on their own. In more affluent communities, people indicate that many students spend substantial amounts of time at daycare or in latchkey programs; in less affluent communities, many students are reportedly left alone, unsupervised, before and after school. As a result, many schools are dealing with enormous pressure to provide special help and social services (e.g., nutritional and emotional support) in order to attend to students' safety and well being as well as to insure their ability to concentrate on school.

In the words of one person, "School is becoming a social service organization in a broader sense as a socialization process for raising kids." In a number of schools, people worried that there are not enough services for students who need them and that, as a result of limited resources, some children are "falling through the cracks." As one teacher put it, "Some students have a serious agenda for survival, and they're here because of the caring."

Changes Occurring in Schools. Minnesota's schools necessarily reflect the reported changes in communities, families, and students. For example, in small districts in greater Minnesota, budget concerns and pressures to "pair and share" educational services are the direct result of changes already discussed. Also, as suggested previously, many school staff members reported that their job roles and responsibilities have continually expanded from classroom teaching to dealing with students' personal problems, whether inside or outside of the classroom. A number of teachers indicated that there is simply not enough time during the school day any longer to properly do their primary job of teaching students. Instead, teaching now requires them to "wear multiple hats," and, for many, the expansion of their traditional role has been both frustrating and discouraging. As one said,

> Teaching is better than it has ever been. . . but social services haven't caught up with the needs.

Other perceived school changes relate directly to schools themselves. First--and clearly related to the expanding role of teachers--is the fact that many of the individuals interviewed reported their struggle merely to survive and adjust to changing

professional roles in the classroom, school, and district, with what they saw as overwhelming and increasing workloads and limited time frames in which to concentrate on the business of teaching. In the words of one teacher,

> Over the years, more pressure is being put on the classroom teacher, requirements to do more, in the same amount of time we've always had. We have to teach computers, we have to squeeze that in, then the counselor comes with her things, a special program, and you have to squeeze that in. . .

The need to cope with continuing change is a constant in the lives of those who were interviewed, but while the responsibilities of teachers and principals have increased significantly over the years, salary increases and other rewards have not, in the opinion of many, been commensurate.

In recent years, the notion of site-based management has prompted several of the project sites to develop participatory decision-making processes at the local level. Some individuals discussed the effect of such activity on teachers who have, in the past, worked in a very different administrative environment. One teacher noted:

> We are trained professionals, but not prepared for site-based management and shared decision-making.

While many teachers indicated an appreciation for the opportunity to participate in decisions, many reported that the system in place at their site was cumbersome and time-consuming. In addition, there appeared to be confusion at a number of sites about who ought to make what decisions and how exactly these decisions might be made.

Second, many people noted that teachers and administrators in their district have worked in education for a long while, creating an aging population of educators who have "survived" several earlier reform efforts. One teacher was clear about the challenge this presents:

> We have a mature staff, which means we need more in-services to update them. Because they are older, they are less likely to accept change, and [they may] resist things like OBE.

Not all seasoned staff will necessarily resist change; however, in the words of one staff member, "How willing are teachers going to be to change?. . . How do we redirect [and] refocus. . .?" While the older age of the school staff may in part be due to constant cuts in funding throughout the past decade, some individuals sensed that the small number of younger teachers was also related to teaching's perceived low status with minimal financial awards among younger

people.

In summary, those interviewed in April and May, 1990, spoke of a number of changes of importance to the long-term transformation process. Perceived changes in communities, families, students, and schools must, in their view, be taken into account in efforts to create educational structures for the next century.

Response to Educational Change Activities

Answers to the second baseline question documented people's responses to change activities at their sites prior to the summer OEL clinical sessions. Some of the news was good: Many educators indicated that they were enthusiastic about the transformation-related changes occurring in their districts. Some individuals had reportedly taken on educational transformation as a "personal cause" within project sites. Others expressed their commitment to the change process:

> I am excited about moving on. I think we have some really strong possibilities here. I think if anything, we're too anxious. It's going to take time.

> . . . [OBE] sounds exciting because it sounds so clean cut and expectations are clear. The idea of teaming in unusual ways and of kids having success sounds exciting.

> OBE will catch those students who are not getting the education they deserve. Kids at the top are not being challenged. OBE will allow us to do a better job with kids toward the bottom and the top.

However, when interviews were conducted in the spring of 1990, the majority of project sites indicated confusion about the OEL's expectations. A number of sites reported they were already developing transformational programs before the OEL project, and they perceived the state as trying to "catch up" with what had been going on in the field. In addition, there was a fair degree of resistance reported towards the OEL change process. Four themes emerged from the data: competing priorities at the project sites; lack of understanding; disagreement with OBE, the OEL clinical goals, or both; and concern with the state level approach and support for long-term change.

Competing Priorities. One theme across sites that reportedly limited the success of the R&D project involved the competing priorities of many project sites. The OEL project was just one of a number of state- and district-initiated change efforts, and, for many school personnel, it was one too many. As one person put it, "We are all numb." This was particularly true among districts in

greater Minnesota where some schools are struggling to survive decreasing tax bases, related budget cuts, and cooperation efforts. The following quotations capture the respondents' sense of frustration:

> We are overwhelmed. We want stability, and we don't like change.
>
> Nobody asked me, and they should have.
>
> They are giving us so much stuff all at once that you can't keep up.

One central office staff person reportedly serves on 41 different committees within her district, and the alphabet soup of Minnesota change and accountability measures, including AOM, PER, MEEP, OBE, OEL, SBM, PS, CC,[1] and even Chapter I, routinely boggles the minds of newcomers. As someone put it, "With all the new things--MEEP, PS, CC, R&D--there is just too much!"

Lack of Understanding. A second theme related to respondents' understanding of the change activities at their sites. On the one hand, many school personnel appeared well-informed and

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[1]Assurance of Mastery; Planning, Evaluating, and Reporting; Minnesota Educational Effectiveness Program; Outcome-Based Education; Office of Educational Leadership; Site-Based Management, Pairing and Sharing, Cooperation and Combination

knowledgeable about OBE concepts and the specific changes occurring in their districts. One person commented, "I'll be perfectly honest. I think [our teachers] are ahead of many teachers in bigger schools." On the other hand, numerous individuals reported little knowledge or awareness of what was happening and a basic lack of understanding of key concepts. Many reported that they had attended OBE-related workshops and seminars, but were still confused about the goals of OBE, the OEL R&D project, and educational transformation. This group often labeled workshops "too theoretical" and expressed practical concerns about implementing OBE in their school.

> Outcome-based education sounds great. But what is it? I don't think anyone has truly defined it yet, at least to my satisfaction.
>
> I am working to understand the concept of outcome-based education, let alone implement it!
>
> The only problem I see with it [OBE] is the logistics of it, how to manage it. I can't find anyone who can tell me how it works.
>
> We were OBE-ized in two days of workshops.
>
> I would say right now there are only a few teachers who know very much about OBE. For the most part, I think the rest of the faculty is waiting to see how things go.

Generally speaking, the more informed individuals were about outcome-based education and educational transformation, the more positive and excited they tended to be about the R&D project. The less informed individuals were, the less positive and excited they tended to be about the project. It was also evident that many school personnel disagreed as to the extent of change targeted by the project.

Disagreement with OBE and the OEL Goals. A clear difference in ideology or philosophy among the expressed OEL goals and those of people involved in the project emerged at a number of sites. Some indicated that they are skeptical of educational transformation and question whether learner outcome systems will actually help students to learn and pass tests. Given the prevalance of objectives-based curricula, many wondered exactly how OBE differed from current practice. Further, a number of these individuals simply did not agree with the goals of OBE and the related educational transformation as they understood them. Their words make their cases:

> We believe in change it if will help our kids, and we are confident in the teachers, but why does it have to be OBE?

> Parents will be upset that we are experimenting with their kids, that students are not being graded the same way. There have been few complaints so far, but I anticipate that there will be more.
>
> I basically feel that all good teachers have always had outcomes in mind.
>
> Good teachers don't need OBE!

Another group reported that trying to build a "failure-free" school system was an unrealistic goal and that some students are always going to fail regardless of the school program in use. For some parents in particular, failure was seen as a necessary preparation for life, and to "cushion" students from such experience was seen as a mistake:

> The entire concept is flawed. It is unrealistic to always experience success.
>
> I still think there [are] some kids that [sic] are never going to make it.
>
> You still need failure. There cannot be success without failure.
>
> Schools should mirror life. It is all right for kids to learn some failure at school.

The State's Approach to and Support for Long-Term Change. The fourth overall response--and the strongest and most common source of resistance to the OEL project--related to people's

perceptions of the state's approach to and support for long-term change. First, school personnel were often critical of "another top-down state program" being "forced upon" them, even though districts had competed for the OEL funding. They reported that it was not educational transformation per se that they disliked, but more the manner in which they perceive it being implemented: "It should not come from the top down"; and "there's a leeriness because it seems jammed down the teachers' throats." One teacher commented,

> I haven't been made a believer. I perceive it as a top down effort developed by the state and the district.

Second, a number of individuals questioned the state's long-term commitment to meaningful educational transformation and the continuation of the project beyond the end of the funding in June, 1991. People seemed hesitant to get deeply involved in another project or program that may be terminated with short notice. They also indicated that they have gotten frustrated with how the state can and has "changed the rules" on them in the past as change efforts have come and gone at the state level. Consider the following quotations:

> I think most are just taking a wait and see attitude.

> Frankly, I'm cynical because I have seen so many education trends come and go.
>
> What hurts a lot is that OEL wants us to do all these grandiose things and then [will] cut the money off in two years, and you can't expect a traditional system to change in two years.
>
> It should not be "change for change sake" or a "passing fad" or the "latest trend."
>
> There's nothing that turns off people faster than to get their hopes and enthusiasm up and then pull the rug out from under them and say "no more dollars, sorry". . . The last six years, [there have been] a lot of false starts, some district-wide, some state "dog and pony shows." People say, "This too will pass," just like the other thing we had that's sitting in my cupboard.

Because the OEL is organizationally and physically housed within the Minnesota Department of Education, many educators reportedly distrust it, seeing it as an extension of the "state." However, those interviewed repeatedly noted that teachers throughout their districts would be willing to engage in educational transformation if specific activities can be shown to improve the quality of student learning.

If, then, education transformation--including OBE and the implementation of the OEL goals--is to be successful, teachers and principals must see that it will ultimately and positively affect

students. Site participants' responses to educational change activities prior to the summer, 1990 OEL clinical workshops document competing school life priorities, the need for conceptual clarity, potential disagreement with the stated notions undergirding the transformation process, and concern over the state's long-term approach and commitment to change. How these themes are addressed will clearly affect the course of the reform effort.

## Implications

These 1990 baseline data not only provide a measure of where project sites ended their first year of the OEL R&D project, but also present important information for grounding future activities. The implications fall into three broad categories: the Minnesota context for educational change; the change itself; and the change process.

The Minnesota context for educational change. The burgeoning use of qualitative research and evaluation methods highlights the importance of local context for effecting meaningful change (e.g., Patton, 1986). In this sense, to generalize even across districts is to risk losing information of use at individual learning sites. As the OEL continues its work, then, school and OEL staff need to be aware

of and, where possible, take advantage of the Minnesota context documented in the baseline data. Schwab's four commonplaces (1978) provide a framework for this discussion:

1. Milieu. Three features of the Minnesota educational milieu require special attention. First, communities that are satisfied with existing schools may not welcome a radical transformation of traditional structures and processes of schooling, particularly when it may well require additional resources. Baseline data suggest that change is oftentimes limited by the traditional buildings in which learning sites are housed. But, as Chira (1991, p.1) writes,

> . . . the breast-beating over the state of education has not inspired a public commitment to reform. Most Americans think it is someone else's problem.

Where people are satisfied with traditional education, OEL project reformers must walk a careful line, convincing community and staff that transformational change is both needed and possible, while at the same time not speaking so negatively about current practice as to threaten, discourage, or anger everyone involved. To do this amid the multiple demands and competing priorities in busy people's lives may suggest why, in part, traditional schools remain so firmly

traditional.

A second characteristic of the Minnesota milieu that reformers must consider is that of growing cultural diversity. Unlike other places that have lived with this issue for years, many communities in Minnesota have only recently begun to face the true challenges of a diverse student population, and, breaking cultural stereotypes, "Minnesota nice" in some instances is giving way to different emotions. That this is true across district types--from greater Minnesota to the inner city--suggests the importance of taking on this problem squarely and working to create a new system that truly creates equal access to learning for all of Minnesota's children. The implementation of the state's "multicultural, gender-fair, disability-aware" rule provides motivation and certain resources for the change, but the specific means to the multicultural end are by no means clear.

The third feature requiring attention is that of parents' presumed ability to become involved in school activities. Baseline data suggest that Minnesota's changing family demographics parallel those of the rest of the country and that, for many parents, good intentions to participate in their children's education simply may

not compete with the ongoing demands of the workplace and the home. And yet several of the OEL stated outcomes speak to increased roles for parents at the learning site, both in creating a personalized learning plan for their children and in participating in site-based governance. In the words of a recent Minneapolis editorial writer,

> . . . what if both parents are working and have little free time, or a single parent is working and has less, or the parent is an uneducated teenager, or parents are alcoholics, or schools are across town in an alien neighborhood and hard to reach, or a parent can't afford day care and the child watches television all day, or the parents themselves aren't committed to the benefits of formal education? (Star Tribune, 3/11/91)

Positing parental involvement may be far easier than making it happen.

2. Teachers. Reform advocates speak of changing roles for America's teachers (e.g., Maeroff, 1988), but for teachers accustomed to traditional roles these new roles may come at considerable personal and professional malaise. For those who function successfully in the current system, the brave new "community of learners" may hold little appeal, and this may be especially true for teachers approaching the end of their careers.

The Concerns-Based Adoption Model (Hall, Wallace, & Dossett, 1973) has long since documented the importance of working with and supporting school staff as they implement innovations, and this will especially be the case in innovations as dramatically different from traditional practice as OBE, the OEL outcomes, or educational transformation. The importance of showing as soon as is reasonable the direct effect of these changes on student performance cannot be understated.

3. Students. Baseline data reinforce people's perceptions that the students attending schools today bring a variety of concerns and challenges in the classroom door that can no longer be ignored. Transformational efforts must address the multiple needs of students and their families--curricular, extra-curricular, and non-academic--if all students are truly to succeed in learning.

4. Curriculum. Given the nature of the research design and the early stages of the change process, few curricular concerns emerged in the spring, 1990 interviews. Some questioned the distinction between an objective and an outcome, while others noted the need for inter- and multi-disciplinary teaching. Project sites' commitment to OBE will no doubt provide additional implications for

this topic in the coming years.

The change itself. The results of the study make it evident--and not surprisingly--that many school personnel are confused and unable to distinguish among the three major concepts that form the project's basis (i.e., OBE, the OEL outcomes, and educational transformation). Michael Patton, referring to OBE, noted that the concept was "conceptually muddled and politically charged" (Schleisman & King, 1990); the same phrases apply equally well to the two other concepts. Placed in a school or district context crowded with competing priorities and limited resources, the transformational change process will likely have little chance for success if these terms are not operationalized and brought to life in terms teachers, principals, and parents can understand.

Conceptual clarity is an important short-term goal, but a related implication is the need to clarify short-term project priorities. As noted earlier, one factor that has limited the project's success relates to the numerous priorities that project sites live with. While educational transformation is perceived by many to be an exciting direction in educational improvement, others in the same districts see it as yet another program to implement or

as one more thing added to already heavy workloads. In addition, because the state plan evolved after the R&D project sites had been selected, most had to revise their original OBE grant application plans to accommodate the new state plan. For a number of the project sites, this remains a source of irritation.

While being sensitive to competing priorities and the individuality of sites, the OEL should, first of all, select specific priorities, communicate them clearly, and then help sites develop a process through which specific changes can be initiated and managed. A number of means are at hand for this process. OEL clinical workshops and institutes explore topics related to OBE, the OEL outcomes, and educational transformation on both a conceptual and practical level. The OEL Network, with representatives from each project site, meets regularly to share "success" stories and discuss problems. Further, the collaborative research process ideally will, over time, lead to collective problem-solving among project sites and site-based action research.

The change process. The final implications relate to the process through which project sites are effecting change. First, baseline data present the OEL a difficult challenge: to manage its

top-down mandate into a bottom-up process. The strongest resistance related to the state's approach to and support for long-term change. School personnel reported that educational transformation may be a good idea, but not if it is forced on them. It is crucial, then, that the OEL alter the "another top-down state program" perception that exists in school districts throughout the state and continue to develop a collegial management style sensitive to school systems' competing priorities. Whether this is a viable or even possible strategy for an office in a state bureaucracy is an important question.

Second, because most school systems and school personnel questioned the state's long-term commitment to educational transformation and its continuation of the project beyond the next year, securing ongoing funding for the R&D effort should be a top priority. The bienniel competition for resources within the state legislature provides little comfort for districts engaging in major transformation efforts.

A final implication concerns the use of the research process to facilitate project goals. The results of the baseline study convincingly demonstrate the potential of the OEL R&D project for

eventual educational transformation. A fall, 1990 survey documented the commitment of the ten project sites to implementing a number of radical innovations in their districts (e.g., eliminating the D and F grades in one rural high school). Research can assist ongoing efforts first, by helping participants understand the change process of which they are part and second, by providing evidence of how these changes affect students. The collaborative, action-oriented research approach allows for combining knowledge, skills, and talents for a long-term effort.

Ted Sizer (1983) once wrote, ". . . it is impossible to change very much without changing most of everything. The result is paralysis." This paper has presented the results and implications of baseline data on the OEL R&D project collected in April and May, 1990 at ten project sites across Minnesota where a great deal is changing with little visible paralysis to date. The project continues, and, as the legislature debates the funding future of the OEL, data are currently being gathered for year two. While the project outcomes are clearly in process, many people at many learning sites are optimistic that, for their district, this may be the change effort that actually sticks. We hope they are right.

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Appendix A. OEL Clinical Outcomes (Summer, 1990)

## *Outcomes for Participants to Explore During the Clinical Workshop*

There are two broad categories of outcomes to be explored during the clinical: 1) Organization structures and processes, and 2) Personalizing learning processes. All outcomes explored during the clinical workshop are for a learning site (school). Additional outcomes are necessary at the district and state level but will be explored through methods other than the clinical workshop.

### Participant Outcomes

### Transforming Organization Structures and Processes

**Outcome One:**

Staff, parents, and the community share a vision of the purpose and nature of schooling that is consistent with the beliefs that 1) all youth can achieve a common core of learning outcomes, and 2) learning sites can be organized so that every learner will achieve his or her maximum potential.

**Outcome Two:**

Learners are organized into multi-aged *community of learners* (of 75 to 125 learners for ages 3 through 7, 100 to 150 learners for ages 7 through 11, 100 to 250 learners for ages 11 through 14, and 200 to 300 for ages 14 through 21) which serve as their home base for three or more years. This is the organizational unit in which the learner participates in a personalized learning program to achieve outcomes in the core curriculum and other areas as determined by the community of learners and the learning site.

**Outcome Three:**

Learners are organized into peer groups of equal numbers from each age within the community of learners. The advisor is a staff member of the community of learners. The advisor 1) serves as the program planning guide and advocate for members of the peer group, 2) is responsible for communication regarding peer group members with other staff and with the group members' families, and 3) works with members for their development and growth.

**Outcome Four:**

Each community of learners is composed of a cross section of staff and a designated leader. They collaboratively plan and implement all programs for their learners to achieve the outcomes designated by the site. The staff of the community of learners develops programs for additional outcomes they choose to implement.

**Outcome Five:**

The staff of the community of learners divides the responsibilities for program leadership, planning, and implementation based on training (licensure), experience, interests, and the differentiated roles established by the site.

**Outcome Six:**

The staff of the community of learners utilizes effective processes for communicating, planning, problem solving, and resolving conflicts.

**Outcome Seven:**

The staff of the community of learners participates in a peer coaching process focused on the continuous development of professional knowledge and skills determined to be priorities by the staff of the community of learners.

**Outcome Eight:**

**A. Learning sites for ages 3-11:** Satellite communities of learners are established for achieving the outcomes in subject areas not available in the community of learners. The staff functions as a community of learners in every aspect except in the peer group relationship. Advisory responsibilities are limited to program planning and communication regarding the learner's work within the satellite areas only.

**B. Learning sites for ages 11-21:** Satellite communities of learners are established for achieving the outcomes in subject areas not available in the community of learners and for advanced outcomes in all subject areas. The staff functions as a community of learners in every aspect except in the peer group relationship. Advisory responsibilities are limited to program planning and communication regarding the learner's work within the satellite areas until the majority of the learners outcomes are being delivered in the satellite community. At this time the learner may chose the satellite as the location for advisory responsibilities.

**Outcome Nine:**

Site level decision processes involve a site council made up of a representative of each community of learners, satellite community of learners, support staff, and site administration personnel. Site level decision authority, roles, and processes are clearly delineated in areas necessary for site innovation and flexibility.

**Outcome Ten:**

Parent representatives from each community of learners serve on a site advisory board with a clearly delineated structure, decision authority, and roles.

**Outcome Eleven:**

Site level planning processes are coordinated with other sites and agencies to ensure the articulation and joint development of programs to achieve common learner outcomes.

**Outcome Twelve:**

The collection of multiple assessments of learner knowledge, attitudes, and performance is coordinated among the site, community of learners, and learning activities. The data is used to plan personalized programs for the learner, programs for the community of learners, programs for the site, and provide accountability at the site level.

**Outcome Thirteen:**

Program development processes of the site and community of learners foster partnerships which expand learning opportunities both on and off the site.

**Outcome Fourteen:**

Planning processes of the site and community of learners are coordinated with various agencies and organizations to provide effective and accessible services for high risk learners and their families.

## Personalizing Learning Processes

**Outcome Fifteen:**

Learning site processes expand, integrate, and add specificity to the concept level outcomes which the learners of the site are responsible to achieve. The learning site council determines the concept level outcomes each community of learners or satellite community of learners is to achieve.

**Outcome Sixteen:**

The learning communities and satellite communities utilize a three phase planning process that insures the collaborative participation of learners, parents, and staff in developing a personalized learning program.

**Phase I -- Formulating**

Assessments of learners' a) background and experiences, b) interests, c) learning styles, and d) needs.

Establishing concept level outcomes for integrated focus.

Designating and broadly describing integrated and/or separated units of study to achieve concept level outcomes.

**Phase II -- Designing**

Involve learners in design of topics and approaches through advisory group or class processes.

Determine division of staff responsibilities to design and critique units.

Use the development of scenarios and dilemmas and other effective planning processes to design integrated instructional units.

Determine the instructional design that is appropriate for the outcomes to be achieved and the nature of the learners.

Determine the multiple assessments to be used.

Introduce units to learners in detail.

**Phase III -- Implementing and Refining**

Schedule learners into learning activities, with learners taking increasing responsibility for designing own personalized learning plan as they mature.

Conduct learning activities.

Hold adjustment, refinement, and scheduling meetings as needed.

Assess achievement of outcomes and regroup learners for instruction.

Implement extension and alternative learning activities based on assessment.

Assess and continue cycle until achievement of outcomes is at satisfactory level.

Review and refine as needed the three phase planning process used.

**Outcome Seventeen:**

Learners become increasingly independent in their ability to direct their own learning.

**Outcome Eighteen:**

Reporting the assessments of learners' progress is a collaborative process involving the learners, the families, and the teachers. The reporting process is designed to enhance knowledge about achievement, independent learning skills, self concept as a learner, and the focus for future development.